

Thirty Years of State Cost-Share for Soil & Water Conservation

- On July 1, 2003, the state cost-share program, or the Iowa Financial Incentive Program, as it is known today, has been funded for 30 years.
 - Iowa became the first state to appropriate state cost-share funds for conservation practices.
- FY 1974 & 1975 funding was \$2 million (Low)
- FY 1985 funding was \$8,644,000 (High)
- Total dollars appropriated to program \$182,309,933.22
- \$3 to \$4 million unanswered demand every year
- Cooperators may receive financial incentives for approved management practices.
- 5% of each years' appropriation is allocated to the Publicly-owned lakes program.
- 5% of each years' appropriation is set aside to abate soil loss complaints under the mandatory program.
- 30% of the district's allocation may be used for the establishment of management practices.
- Approximately 2500 landowners installed practices each year to protect more than 27,000 acres with terraces, waterways, structures and basins.
- Acres benefited per year: 40,740
- 5 year average of practices installed per year:
 - 940 acres of Contour Strip Cropping
 - 170 acres of Contouring
 - 1,975 feet of Diversions
 - 17,242 feet of Field Windbreaks
 - 1,068 acres of No-till
 - 582 acres of Pasture & Hayland Planting
 - 8,328 feet of Underground Outlets
 - 2,519 Water & Sediment Basins
 - 587 miles of Terrace
 - 800 acres of Waterways
- Fund allocations are made to soil & water conservation districts. Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners set priorities for their use, and field office staff assure the technical quality of practices built.
- Funds are allocated directly to 100 soil & water conservation districts on the basis of each district's share of the state's most erosive cropland soils.
- Five elected soil & water conservation district commissioners in each soil & water conservation district work with field office staff to prioritize conservation needs in a particular district.
- Any landowner in the state of Iowa, who is a cooperator with the soil & water conservation district, who meets the requirements, and who enters into a voluntary agreement with the district to install and maintain an approved conservation practice, is eligible to receive 50 percent of the estimated or actual cost of the project, whichever is the lesser amount.
- Permanent practices installed are subject to a 20-year maintenance agreement to assure their long-term, successful performance.

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Thirty Years of State Cost-Share for Soil & Water Conservation – page 2

- All practices must meet USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service specifications.
- Funds utilized through this program are matched 50:50 by landowners, spent locally to hire private construction contractors, and reinvested by those contractors in local communities. Local jobs and businesses are supported by these funds, in addition to the principal benefits of soil conservation and water quality protection.
- The installation of soil & water conservation practices provides permanent protection of Iowa's soil resources and water quality. Public benefits of clean water for drinking and recreation warrant public investment in conservation practice installation.
- Once farmers get started in the conservation program with some public cost-share assistance, they quite often will continue with installation of conservation practices – especially terraces – even though the full 50 percent cost-share is not available.
- There is a definite public interest in the stewardship of private lands. The installation of permanent soil conservation practices will, in most instances, have considerable off-site benefit. Sediment is kept from reaching road ditches, waterways remain clean and unclogged, lakes have a longer life, adjacent lands are not subjected to sediment deposition, and potential non-point pollutants stay on the farm.
- Soil & water conservation district commissioners throughout the state have done an outstanding job of obligating these funds in each district. Without the assistance of commissioners, Natural Resources Conservation Service staff, and Division of Soil Conservation personnel assigned to districts, the IFIP would not have operated so smoothly. Commissioners and staff are to be congratulated for the time and effort they have taken to make the Iowa Financial Incentives Program successful and effective.